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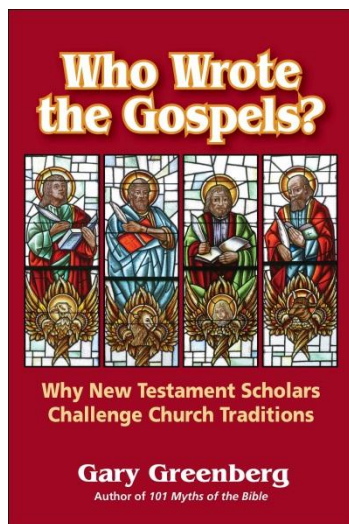
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HISTORIAN CHALLENGES TRADITIONAL IDENTITIES OF GOSPEL AUTHORS



Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did not write the Gospels says biblical historian Gary Greenberg in his latest book, *Who Wrote the Gospels? Why New Testament Scholars Challenge Church Traditions*. At least, not the Matthew, Mark, Luke or John of Church tradition, he adds. Controversial as this view is, he notes that it is widely accepted among New Testament scholars. Yet few members of the lay public know about this modern scholarly consensus, let alone why scholars hold these views.

According to the prevailing Church tradition the four Gospel authors include Matthew and John, who were two of the Twelve Apostles; Mark, who was a secretary to the Apostle Peter; and Luke, who was a close companion of the Apostle Paul. But the historical evidence suggests otherwise. All four Gospels were written anonymously and, based on the writings of the early church fathers, for close to two centuries after they were written, Christians had no idea who wrote them. Only in this later

period did Christian scholars start guessing as to who the authors might have been. As the guesses were repeated and adopted by other Christian writers and thinkers, the guesses became traditions, and traditions became dogma. Furthermore, none of the Gospel authors claims to have been a member of the apostolic group around Jesus or to have actually known any of the original Twelve Apostles.

Modern scholarship, based on linguistic and textual analysis, and accompanied by the discovery of many ancient copies of Gospel manuscripts, shows that all four Gospels were written in Greek, outside of Roman Israel, at least thirty to sixty years after the death of Jesus. The evidence also shows that Matthew, the alleged associate of Jesus, actually copied much of his Gospel from Mark and most of the rest from other sources, suggesting he lacked any intimate knowledge of the events surrounding the life of Jesus. Luke also used Mark and other sources to compose his Gospel. John appears to have been written in stages by multiple authors using a variety of written sources, and much of John directly contradicts Matthew, leaving these two alleged Apostles challenging each other's account of Jesus' mission at critical points.

Not only is there a question of the identity of the authors of the original Gospel texts, the evidence from ancient sources also shows that during the first few centuries of Christianity many Christian scribes deliberately altered the Gospel texts and many of these changes have been erroneously incorporated into

our modern Gospel accounts. In one notorious example, the last twelve verses of Mark, the first of the four Gospels to have been written, depict the resurrection of Jesus, but they were not part of Mark's original Gospel. The verses were added later by an unidentified scribe trying to bring Mark into line with the other Evangelists. The famous story of the adulterous woman in the Gospel of John is also a late addition to the Gospel, absent from all the earliest sources. One scribe placed the story into the Gospel of Luke.

In his book, Greenberg guides us through the complicated and little-understood world of Gospel source and text criticism. He provides easy-to-follow explanations of the scholarly arguments and provides numerous examples to illustrate the reasoning process leading to the conclusions adopted by the scholarly community. Fascinating topics covered in Greenberg's *Who Wrote the Gospels?* include the following:

- What is the Synoptic Problem and how do scholars resolve it?
- What is the mysterious Q source that influenced Matthew and Luke?
- Is there a literary relationship between the Gospels of Mark and John?
- Did the original Gospel of Mark depict the resurrection of Jesus?
- Did the Evangelists agree with each other about important story details?
- Why did orthodox Christian scribes alter the Gospel texts?
- When scholars encounter significant contradictions in ancient Gospel manuscripts, how do they decide which text comes closest to the original?
- What manuscripts stand behind our modern Gospel texts and how accurate are they?

Who Wrote the Gospels? Why New Testament Scholars Challenge Church Traditions is published by Pereset Press and will be released on June 30, 2011. **For review copies contact info@peresetpress.com.** Educators teaching New Testament courses at the college level wishing to receive a complimentary copy should also contact info@peresetpress.com and state what institution they teach at, what subjects they teach, and what position they hold at the institution.

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By Gary Greenberg

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